REZA EHSANIAN

NIH-Oxford Scholar 2007

Degrees: San Jose State University B.S. Biology, 2000; M.S. Biology Concentration: Systems Physiology, 2008

Research Area: Oncology; Head and Neck Cancer

Reza Ehsanian attended San Jose State University for his undergraduate and master's training. Reza's focus at SJSU during his undergraduate and master's research was on the nature of the ultrastructural damage of neurons in Parkinson's disease and the compensatory mechanisms that occur in response to their degeneration. He also worked at the NASA Ames Research Center on the structural and functional organization of the inner ear to determine how the individual components within the system provide self-motion information. This research aimed to discover new treatments and possibly cures for positional nystagmus, vertigo, motion sickness, and other vestibular disorders. Inspired by those who took the to mentor him, he devoted considerable efforts to underprivileged youth serving both as an instructor at SJSU in a special program for "high risk" freshmen lacking English proficiency and developing lessons and hands-on activities at NASA to introduce high school students to the scientific method and space biology. He then entered Stanford University School of Medicine to pursue a career as a physician scientist. While there he continued his outreach by coordinating the S.U.M.M.A. Conference, the largest minority premedical conference on the west coast and was a T.A. for the Early Matriculation Program at Stanford; both programs strive to increase the number of underrepresented minority and disadvantaged students who pursue careers as leaders in academic and clinical medicine. In addition, he continued his research at NASA Ames Research Center and was a T.A. for the pre-clinical courses in human anatomy, histology, respiratory and cardiac physiology. After his preclinical years, he was awarded the prestigious Howard Hughes Medical Institute Scholarship in the Cloister Program at NIH. Under the mentorship of Dr. Carter Van Waes, he has been conducting research at the NIDCD on oncogenes that are responsible for head and neck cancer, work he will continue as an NIH/Oxford Scholar. Of his aspirations, Reza says, "In addition to extending existing medical knowledge as a professor and researcher, the most rewarding and fulfilling aspects of my career will be in developing caring relationships with patients and watching my research move from 'the bench to the bedside' as a clinician. My desire is to place myself in a position to help develop new treatments and improve the quality of public health as a physician scientist."